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A

LETTER

TO A

PERSON

Lately join'd with the

PEOPLE call'd *QUAKERS.*

In ANSWER to

A LETTER wrote by HIM.

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A

LETTER, &c.

Briſtol, Feb. 10, 1747-8.

YOU aſk me, "Is there any Difference, between *Quakeriſm* and *Chriſtianity?* I think there is. What that Difference is, I will tell you as plainly as I can.

I will firſt ſet down the Account of *Quakeriſm* (ſo call'd) which is given by *Robert Barclay:* And then add, wherein (as I conceive) it agrees with, and wherein it differs from Chriſtianity.

But I muſt premiſe, I do by no Means intend to deny, by any of the following Reflections, That many *Quakers* (ſo termed) are Real Chriſtians; Men who have the Mind that was in *Chriſt*. With ſome of them I count it a Bleſſing to converſe, and cannot but eſteem them very highly in Love. Therefore in anſwering your Queſtion, (which Love conſtrains me to do) let me be underſtood to ſpeak of their *Opinions* only: Meaning by *Quakeriſm*, That Syſtem of *Opinions* which is eſpouſed by the People commonly call'd *Quakers*.

I. "Seeing the Height of all Happineſs is placed in the true Knowledge of GOD, the right Underſtanding of this is what is moſt neceſſary to be known in the firſt Place."

II. "It is by the Spirit alone that the true Knowledge of GOD hath been, is, and can be reveal'd. And theſe Revelations which are abſolutely neceſſary for the building up of True Faith, neither do nor can ever con-

contradict Right Reason or the Teſtimony of the Scriptures."

Thus far there is no Difference between Quakeriſm and Chriſtianity.

" Yet theſe Revelations are not to be ſubjected to the Examination of the Scriptures as to a Touchſtone."

Here, as I apprehend, there is a Difference. The Scriptures are the Touchſtone whereby Chriſtians examine all (Real or Suppoſed) Revelations. In all Caſes they appeal *to the Law and to the Teſtimony*, and *try* every *Spirit* thereby.

III. " From theſe Revelations of the Spirit of God to the Saints, have proceeded the Scriptures of Truth."

In this there is no Difference between Quakeriſm and Chriſtianity.

" Yet the Scriptures are *not the Principal Ground of all Truth and Knowledge*, nor the adequate, primary Rule of Faith and Manners. Nevertheleſs they are a Secondary Rule, ſubordinate to the Spirit. By Him the Saints are led into all Truth. Therefore the Spirit is the firſt and Principal Leader."

If by theſe Words, " The Scriptures are *not the Principal Ground of Truth and Knowledge*, nor the *adequate, primary Rule of Faith and Manners*," be only meant, That *the Spirit is our firſt and Principal Leader*," Here is no Difference between Quakeriſm and Chriſtianity.

But there is great Impropriety of Expreſſion. For tho' the Spirit is our *Principal Leader*, yet He is not our *Rule* at all: The Scriptures are the *Rule* whereby He *leads us into* all Truth. Therefore, only talk good *Engliſh:* Call the Spirit our *Guide* (which ſignifies an Intelligent Being) and the Scriptures our *Rule* (which ſignifies ſomething uſed by an Intelligent Being) and all is plain and clear.

IV. " All Mankind is fallen and dead, deprived of the Senſation of this Inward Teſtimony of God, and ſubject to the Power and Nature of the Devil, while they abide in their Natural State. And hence not only

ly their Words and Deeds, but all their Imaginations are evil perpetually in the Sight of God."

V. "God out of his infinite Love hath so loved the World, that he gave his only Son, to the End that whosoever believeth on him, might have everlasting Life. And He enlighteneth every Man that cometh into the World, as he tasted Death for every Man."

VI. "The Benefit of the Death of *Christ* is not only extended to such as have the distinct Knowledge of his Death and Sufferings, but even unto those who are inevitably excluded from this Knowledge. Even these may be Partakers of the Benefit of his Death, tho' ignorant of the History, if they suffer his Grace to take Place in their Hearts, so as of wicked Men to become Holy."

In these Points there is no Difference between Quakerism and Christianity.

VII. "As many as receive the Light, in them is produced a holy and spiritual Birth, bringing forth Holiness, Righteousness, Purity, and all other blessed Fruits. By which holy Birth, as we are sanctified, so we are justified."

Here is a wide Difference between Quakerism and Christianity. This is flat Justification by Works. Whereas the Christian Doctrine is, That *we are justified by Faith:* That *unto him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his Faith is counted to him for Righteousness.*

The Ground of this Mistake, is, the not understanding the Meaning of the Word Justification. For *Robert Barclay* takes it in the same Sense as the Papists do, confounding it with Sanctification. So in the 208th Page of his *Apology*, he says in express Terms, "Justification taken in its proper Signification, is, Making one just, and is *all one with* Sanctification."

VIII. "In whom this holy Birth is fully brought forth, the Body of Sin and Death is crucified, and their Hearts

Hearts are ſubjected to the Truth, ſo as not to obey any Suggeſtion of the Evil One, but to be free from Actual Sinning and tranſgreſſing of the Law of God, and in that Reſpect, perfect."

IX. "They in whom this Grace hath wrought in part, to purify and ſanctify them, may yet by Diſobedience fall from it, and make Shipwreck of the Faith."

In theſe Propoſitions, there is no Difference between Quakeriſm and Chriſtianity.

X. "By this Light of God in the Heart, every true Miniſter is ordain'd, prepared, and ſupplied in the Work of the Miniſtry."

As to Part of this Propoſition, there is no Difference, between Quakeriſm and Chriſtianity. Doubtleſs "every true Miniſter is by the Light of God prepared and ſupplied in the Work of the Miniſtry." But the Apoſtles themſelves *ordain'd* them by *laying on of Hands*. So we read throughout the *Acts of the Apoſtles*.

"They who have this Light of God, ought to preach the Goſpel, tho' without Human Commiſſion or Literature. On the other Hand, they who have it not, are not true Miniſters of the Goſpel."

I cannot quite agree with you in this. But it is a difficult Point. I think, and let think.

"They who have received this Gift, ought not to uſe it as a Trade, to get Money thereby. Yet it may be lawful for ſuch to receive what may be needful to them for Food and Cloathing."

In this there is no Difference between Quakeriſm and Chriſtianity.

"We judge it no ways unlawful, for a Woman to preach in the Aſſemblies of God's People."

In this there is a manifeſt Difference. For the Apoſtle *Paul* ſaith expreſsly, *Let your Women keep Silence in the Churches: for it is not permitted unto them to ſpeak.----And if they will learn any Thing, let them aſk their Huſbands at home; for it is a Shame for Women to ſpeak in the Church*, 1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35.

Robert

Robert Barclay indeed ſays, "*Paul* here only reproves the inconſiderate and talkative Women."

But the Text ſays no ſuch Thing. It evidently ſpeaks of Women in general.

Again, the Apoſtle *Paul* ſaith to *Timothy*, *Let the Woman learn in Silence with all Subjection. For I ſuffer not a Woman to teach, nor to uſurp Authority over the Man*, (which Public Teaching neceſſarily implies) *but to be in Silence*, 1 Tim. ii. 11, 12.

To this *Robert Barclay* makes only that harmleſs Reply; "We think this is not any Ways repugnant to this Doctrine." Not repugnant to this, "I do ſuffer a Woman to teach!" Then I know not what is.

"But a Woman *labour'd with* Paul *in the Work of the Goſpel*." Yea! but not in the Way he had himſelf expreſsly forbidden.

"But *Joel* foretold, *your Sons and your Daughters ſhall propheſy*. And *Philip had four Daughters which Propheſied*. And the Apoſtle himſelf directs Women to *Propheſy*; only with their *Heads covered*."

Very Good. But how do you prove that *propheſying* in any of theſe Places means Preaching?

XI. "All True Worſhip to God is offer'd in the inward and immediate Moving of his own Spirit. We ought not to pray or preach where and when we will, but where and when we are moved thereto by his Spirit. All other Worſhip, both Praiſes, Prayers and Preachings, which Man ſets about in his own Will and at his own Appointment, which he can begin and end at his Pleaſure, do or leave undone, as Himſelf ſees meet, are but Superſtitions, Will-worſhip, and abominable Idolatries."

Here lies One of the main Differences between Quakeriſm and Chriſtianity.

It is true indeed, That "all True Worſhip to God is offer'd in the inward and immediate Moving of his own Spirit:" Or, (to ſpeak plain) that we cannot truly worſhip God, unleſs his Spirit move or incline our Hearts. It is equally true, That "we ought to pray and preach, only where and when we are moved thereto:

thereto by his Spirit." But I fear you do not in any wiſe underſtand, What the being *moved by his Spirit* means? God *moves* Man whom he has made a *reaſonable* Creature, according to the *Reaſon* which he has given him. He *moves* him by his *Underſtanding*, as well as his *Affections*, by *Light* as well as by *Heat*. He moves him to do this or that by *Conviction*, full as often as by *Deſire*. Accordingly, you are as really *moved by the Spirit* when he convinces you, you ought to feed him that is hungry, as when he gives you ever ſo ſtrong an *Impulſe*, *Deſire* or *Inclination* ſo to do.

In like Manner, you are as really *moved* by the Spirit, to pray, whether it be in publick or private, when you have a Conviction it is the Will of God you ſhould, as when you have the Strongeſt *Impulſe* upon your Heart. And He does truly *move* you to preach, when in his Light you *ſee Light*, clearly ſatiſfying you it is his Will: As much as when you *feel* the moſt vehement *Impulſe* or *Deſire*, to *hold forth the Words of Eternal Life*.

Now let us conſider the main Propoſition. "All Worſhip which Man ſets about in his own Will, and at his own Appointment."—Hold! That is quite another Thing. It may be *at his own Appointment*, and yet not *in his own Will*. For Inſtance: It is not my own Will to preach at all. It is quite contrary to my Will. Many a Time have I cried out, Lord, *ſend by whom Thou wilt ſend*: Only *ſend not me!* But I am *moved* by the Spirit of God to preach: He clearly *ſhews* me it is his Will I ſhould: And that I ſhould do it *when* and *where* the greateſt Number of poor Sinners may be gather'd together. *Moved* by Him, I give up my *Will*, and *appoint* a Time and Place, when by his Power I truſt to ſpeak in his Name.

How widely different, then, from True Chriſtianity is that amazing Sentence, "All Praiſes, Prayers and Preachings which Man can begin and end at his Pleaſure, do or leave undone, as himſelf ſees meet, are Superſtitions, Will-worſhip, and abominable Idolatry, in the Sight of God?"

There

There is not one Tittle of Scripture for this: Nor yet is there any ſound Reaſon. When you take it for granted, "In all Preachings which a Man begins or ends at his Pleaſure, does or leaves undone as he *ſees meet*," he is not *moved* by the Spirit of God, you are too haſty a great deal. It may be by the Spirit, that he *ſees meet* to do or leave it undone. How will you prove that it is not? *His Pleaſure* may depend on the Pleaſure of God, ſignified to him by his Spirit. His *appointing* this or that Time or Place, does in no wiſe prove the contrary. Prove me that Propoſition if you can, "Every Man who preaches or prays at an *appointed* Time, preaches or prays *in his own Will* and not by the Spirit."

That all ſuch Preaching is *Will-worſhip*, in the Senſe St. *Paul* uſes the Word, is no more true than that it is Murder. That it is *Superſtition*, remains alſo to be proved. That it is *abominable Idolatry*, how will you reconcile with what follows but a few Lines after? "How ever it might pleaſe God, who winked at the Times of Ignorance, to raiſe ſome Breathings and anſwer them." What! Anſwer the Breathings of *abominable Idolatry!* I obſerve how warily this is worded. But it allows enough. If God ever raiſed and anſwer'd thoſe Prayers, which were made at *ſet* Times, then thoſe Prayers could not be *abominable Idolatry*.

Again, that Prayers and Preachings, tho' made at *appointed* Times, may yet proceed from the Spirit of God may be clearly proved from thoſe other Words of *Robert Barclay* himſelf, Page 389.

"That Preaching (or Prayer) which is not done by the Actings and Movings of God's Spirit, cannot beget Faith." Moſt true. But Preaching and Prayer at *appointed* Times, have begotten Faith (both at *Briſtol* and *Paulton*. You know it well.) Therefore that Preaching and Prayer, tho' at *appointed* Times, was done by the Actings and Movings of God's Spirit."

It follows, that this Preaching and Prayer, were far from *abominable Idolatry*. That Expreſſion can never be defended. Say, It was a raſh Word, and give it up.

In

In Truth, from the Beginning to the End, You ſet this Matter upon a wrong Foundation. It is not on this Circumſtance, " The being at *ſet* Times, or not, that the Acceptableneſs of our Prayers depends: But on the Intention and Tempers with which we pray. He that prays in Faith, at whatſoever Time, is heard. In every Time and Place, GOD accepts him who *lifts up holy Hands, without Wrath or Doubting.* The Charge of Superſtition therefore returns upon yourſelf. For what groſs Superſtition is this, to lay ſo much Streſs on an indifferent Circumſtance, and ſo little on *Faith* and the *Love* of GOD?

But to proceed. " We confeſs Singing of Pſalms, to be a Part of GOD's Worſhip, and very ſweet and refreſhful, when it proceeds from a true Senſe of GOD's Love. But as for Formal Singing, it has no Foundation in Scripture."

In this there is no Difference between Quakeriſm and Chriſtianity.

" Silence is a Principal Part of GOD's Worſhip: *i. e.* Mens " ſitting ſilent together, ceaſing from all Outwards, from their own Words, and Actings, in the Natural Will and Comprehenſion, and feeling after the inward Seed of Life."

In this there is a manifeſt Difference between Quakeriſm and Chriſtianity.

This is Will-worſhip, if there be any ſuch Thing under Heaven. For there is neither Command, nor Example for it in Scripture.

Robert Barclay indeed refers to abundance of Scriptures, to prove it is a *Command.* But as he did not ſee good to ſet them down at length, I will take the Trouble to tranſcribe a few of them.

Pſalm, xxvii. 14. *Wait on the* LORD: *be of good Courage, and He ſhall ſtrengthen thine Heart.*

Pſalm, xxxvii. 7. *Reſt in the* LORD *and wait patiently for him; fret not thyſelf at him who proſpereth in his Way.*

Verſe, 34. *Wait on the* LORD *and keep his Way, and he ſhall exalt thee to inherit the Land.*

Prov.

Prov. xx. 22. *Say not thou I will recompence Evil; but wait on the* LORD, *and He ſhall ſave thee.*

By theſe one may judge of the reſt. But how amazing is this? What are all theſe to the Point in Queſtion?

For *Examples* of *Silent Meetings* he refers to the five Texts of Scripture following:

Acts, ii. 1. *They were all with one Accord in one Place.*

Job, ii. 13. *So they ſat down with him ſeven Days and ſeven Nights, and none ſpake a Word unto him: for they ſaw that his Grief was very great.*

Ezek. ix. 4. *Then were aſſembled unto me every one that trembled at the Words of* GOD —— *And I ſat aſtonied until the Evening Sacrifice.*

Ezek. xiv. 1. and xx. 1. *Then came certain of the Elders of Iſrael unto me, and ſat before me.*

Was it poſſible for *Robert Barclay* to believe, That any one of theſe Texts was any thing to the Purpoſe?

XII. "As there is one LORD and one Faith, ſo there is one Baptiſm." Yea, one Outward Baptiſm: which you deny. Here therefore is another Difference between Quakeriſm and Chriſtianity.

But "if thoſe whom *John* Baptized with Water, were not baptized with the Baptiſm of CHRIST, then the Baptiſm of Water is not the Baptiſm of CHRIST."

This is a mere Quibble. The Sequel ought to be, "Then *that* Baptiſm of Water, (*i. e. John*'s Baptiſm,) was not the Baptiſm of CHRIST." Who ſays it was?

Yet *Robert Barclay* is ſo fond of this Argument that he repeats it almoſt in the ſame Words.

"If John who adminiſtred the Baptiſm of Water, yet did not baptize with the Baptiſm of CHRIST, then the Baptiſm of Water is not the Baptiſm of CHRIST."

This is the ſame Fallacy ſtill. The Sequel here alſo ſhould be, "Then *that* Baptiſm of Water was not the Baptiſm of CHRIST."

He repeats it, with a little Variation a third Time. "CHRIST himſelf ſaith, *John baptized with Water, but ye ſhall be baptized with the Holy Ghoſt.*"

He repeats it a fourth Time: " Peter ſaith, *Then remember'd I the Word of the* LORD, *John baptiz'd with Water, but ye ſhall be baptiz'd with the Holy Ghoſt.* From all which it follows, That ſuch as *John* baptized with Water, yet were not baptized with the Baptiſm of CHRIST." Very true. But this proves neither more nor leſs than that the Baptiſm of *John* differ'd from the Baptiſm of CHRIST. And ſo doubtleſs it did: not indeed as to the *Outward-Sign*, but as to the Inward Grace.

XIII. " The breaking of Bread by CHRIST with his Diſciples was but a Figure, and ceaſes in ſuch as have obtain'd the Subſtance."

Here is another manifeſt Difference between Quakeriſm and Chriſtianity.

From the very Time that our LORD gave the Command, *Do this in Remembrance of Me*, all Chriſtians throughout the habitable World, did *eat Bread and drink Wine in remembrance of Him.*

Allowing therefore all that *Robert Barclay* affirms for eighteen or twenty Pages together, viz. 1. That Believers partake of the Body and Blood of CHRIST in a Spiritual manner; 2. That this may be done, in ſome Senſe, when we are not eating Bread and drinking Wine; 3. That the *Lutherans*, *Calviniſts* and *Papiſts* differ from each other, with regard to the LORD's Supper; and 4. That many of them have ſpoken wildly and abſurdly concerning it: Yet all this will never prove, That we need not do, what CHRIST has expreſly commanded to be done: And what the whole Body of Chriſtians in all Ages have done, in Obedience to that Command.

That there was ſuch a Command, you cannot deny. But you ſay, " It is ceaſed in ſuch as have obtain'd the Subſtance."

St. *Paul* knew nothing of this. He ſays nothing of its ceaſing, in all he writes of it to the *Corinthians*. Nay, quite the contrary. He ſays, *As often as ye eat this Bread and drink this Cup, ye do ſhew the* LORD's *Death till he come.* O, ſay you, the Apoſtle means

" his

" his Inward Coming, which ſome of the *Corinthians* had not yet known." Nay, this cannot be his Meaning. For he ſaith to all the *Corinthian* Communicants, *Ye do ſhew the* LORD's *Death till he come*. Now if He was not come (ſpiritually) in ſome of theſe, undoubtedly he was in others. Conſequently he can not be ſpeaking here of that Coming; which in many of them, at leaſt, was already paſt. It remains, that he ſpeaks of his Coming in the Clouds, to judge both the Quick and Dead.

XIV. " Since GOD hath aſſumed to Himſelf the Dominion of the Conſcience, who alone can rightly inſtruct and govern it, therefore it is not lawful for any whatſoever, to force the Conſciences of others."

In this there is no Difference at all between Quakeriſm and Chriſtianity.

XV. It is not lawful for Chriſtians to give or receive Titles of Honour, as, your Majeſty, your Lordſhip, &c.

In this there is a Difference between Quakeriſm and Chriſtianity. Chriſtians may give Titles of Honour, ſuch as are uſually annext to certain Offices.

Thus St. *Paul* gives the uſual Title of *Moſt Noble*, to the *Roman* Governour. *Robert Barclay* indeed ſays, " He would not have called him ſuch, if he had not been *truly Noble*: As indeed he was, in that he would not give Way to the Fury of the Jews againſt him."

The Scripture ſays quite otherwiſe: That he *did* give Way to the Fury of the Jews againſt him. I read, *Feſtus willing to do the Jews a Pleaſure* (who had *deſired Favour againſt him, that he would ſend for him to Jeruſalem, laying in wait in the Way to kill him*) *ſaid to Paul, Wilt thou go up to Jeruſalem, and there be judged of theſe things before me? Then ſaid Paul, I ſtand at Ceſar's Judgment-Seat, where I ought to be judged: To the Jews have I done no Wrong, as Thou very well knoweſt. If I have done any thing worthy of Death, I refuſe not to die; but if there be none of theſe Things whereof theſe accuſe me, no Man may deliver me unto them.*

Hence

Hence it plainly appears, *Feſtus* was a very wicked Perſon, one who to *do the Jews a Pleaſure*, would have betray'd the innocent Blood. But altho' St. *Paul* was not ignorant of his Character, ſtill he calls him, *Moſt Noble Feſtus*, giving him the Title of his Office; which indeed was neither more nor leſs than ſaying, "Governor *Feſtus*," or "King *Agrippa*."

It is therefore mere Superſtition to ſcruple this. And it is, if poſſible, greater Superſtition ſtill, to ſcruple ſaying, *You*, *Yours*, or *Ihr*, whether to One or more Perſons, as is the Common Way of Speaking in any Country. It is this which fixes the Language of every Nation. It is this which makes me ſay *You* in *England*, *Vous* in *France*, and *Ihr* in *Germany*, rather than *Thou*, *Tu*, or *Du*, rather than Συ, Σε, or Σοι (which if we ſpeak ſtrictly, is the only Scriptural Language; not *Thou* or *Thee*, any more than *You*.) But the placing Religion in ſuch Things as theſe, is ſuch egregious Trifling, as naturally tends to make all Religion ſtink in the Noſtrils of Infidels and Heathens.

And yet this, by a far greater Abuſe of Words than that you would reform, you call *the Plain Language*. O my Friend! He uſes the Plain Language, who ſpeaks the Truth from his Heart. Not he who ſays *Thee* or *Thou*, and in the mean Time will diſſemble or flatter, like the reſt of the World.

"It is not lawful for Chriſtians to kneel or bow the Body, or uncover the Head to any Man."

If this is not lawful, then ſome Law of GOD forbids it. Can you ſhew me that Law? If you cannot, then the ſcrupling this is another plain Inſtance of Superſtition, not Chriſtianity.

"It is not lawful for a Chriſtian to uſe Superfluities in Apparel: As neither, to uſe ſuch Games, Sports and Plays, under the Notion of Recreations, as are not conſiſtent with Gravity and Godly Fear."

As to both theſe Propoſitions, there is no Difference between Quakeriſm and Chriſtianity. Only obſerve, touching the former, that the Sin of *Superfluous Apparel*, lies chiefly in the *Superfluous Expence*. To make it therefore a Point of Conſcience, to differ from others

others, as to the *Shape* or *Colour* of your Apparel, is mere Superſtition: Let the Difference lie in the *Price*, that you may have the more wherewith to cloath them that have none.

"It is not lawful for Chriſtians to ſwear before a Magiſtrate, nor to fight in any Caſe."

Whatever becomes of the latter Propoſition, the former is no Part of Chriſtianity: For CHRIST himſelf anſwered upon Oath before a Magiſtrate. Yea, he would not anſwer till he was put to his Oath; till the High-Prieſt ſaid unto him, *I adjure thee by the Living* GOD.

I have now given you, (ſo far as my Time would permit) a plain Anſwer to a plain Queſtion: Not troubling myſelf with the perſonal Reflections, which make up ſo great a Part of your Letter. Theſe do not at all leſſen my Affection for you: I ſtill mourn over you as one that did run well, that *began in the Spirit*, and is now in Danger of *ending in the Fleſh*. You have an honeſt Heart, but a weak Head: You have a Zeal; but not according to Knowledge. You was zealous once for the Love of GOD and Man; for Holineſs of Heart and Holineſs of Life. You are now zealous, for Particular Forms of Speaking, for a Set of Phraſes, and Opinions. Once your Zeal was againſt Ungodlineſs and Unrighteouſneſs, againſt Evil Tempers and Evil Works. Now it is againſt Forms of Prayer, againſt Singing Pſalms or Hymns, againſt appointing Times of Praying or Preaching: Againſt ſaying *you* to a ſingle Perſon, uncovering your Head, or having too many Buttons upon your Coat. O what a Fall is there! What poor Trifles are theſe, that now well nigh engroſs your Thoughts? Come back, come back to the weightier Matters of the Law, to Spiritual, Rational, Scriptural Religion. No longer waſte your Time and Strength in beating the Air, in vain Controverſies and Strife of Words: But bend your whole Soul to the growing in Grace and in the Knowledge of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, to the continually advancing in that Holineſs, without which you cannot ſee the LORD.

I am your ſincere Friend and Servant,
For CHRIST'S *Sake.*